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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by Foundation for the Rights of the Family, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

1. The family is the cornerstone of society, a unit of production and consumption. It is essential to the education of children and youth and to the stabilization of adults, the place where children, the elderly, the sick and disabled receive emotional and practical support. Families have been and continue to be a bulwark against poverty. When poverty and unemployment hit, families are often the last resource.

2. The family unit is also a powerful agent of social change. Factors such as demography, environment, population, fertility, ageing and social development are ultimately influenced by family behaviour and the decisions taken within the family. This particular role of the family as a source of support should be recognized and supported by policies and programmes.

3. Population policies, family policies and family well-being are closely related to economic development and to increasing the income level and the quality of life of the poor.

4. The main causes for social exclusion are: poverty, gender, age, disease, drugs and alcohol dependence. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, among others, aim to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

5. Social welfare should be more clearly directed towards the root cause of poverty. It should be an integral element in a broad strategy of increasing employment as well as the productivity of weaker segments of society. A central element in this strategy is productive employment. For those who cannot work, sufficient support should be given through security and special benefits.

6. Poverty represents not only material insufficiencies but also a denial of rights and a transgression of human dignity. In many cases, families with children suffer as a result of the unemployment of both parents and are compelled to resort to charity. Poverty permeates all aspects of family life and is also transmitted from generation to generation.

7. A two-tracked strategy should be to link families with global issues, such as poverty, drugs, globalization and social integration; and to report on the situation and needs of poor families in selected countries.

Declaration of the rights of the family

8. Societies worldwide recognize that families have a number of social functions and responsibilities. But families have also rights.

9. The International Conference on Population (Cairo, 5-13 September 1994) implicitly recognizes the rights of the family alongside its functions in chapter V of its Programme of Action entitled "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure".

10. The explicit articulation of the responsibilities and rights of the family can be a source of inspiration and a point of reference to support families and create family-friendly societies.

11. We therefore suggest that an open-ended group be created within the Commission for Social Development to review and extract relevant provisions on the family from national laws, international instruments and existing drafts.

* Issued without formal editing.